DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 151 308 SP 012 261

AUTHOR Aierstock, Barbara A.
TITLE Contract Teaching -- One Step Toward Humanizing Education.
PUB DATE Mar 78
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at Eastern Division, American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (Baltimore, Maryland, March 1-5, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Evaluation Methods; Grading; Humanistic Education; *Individualized Instruction; *Performance Contracts; Physical Education; *Self Actualization; Skill Development; Student Responsibility; *Task Performance; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Contract Teaching

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the subject of "contract teaching", particularly as it relates to the field of instruction for physical education majors. Essentially, contracting for grades includes, "...an agreement between a teacher and a student at the beginning of a course as to the grade the student expects to receive and the amount and quality of work he is expected to produce to earn this grade." Students are asked their option for the grade, "A", "B", or "C". Once the contract with the instructor is signed, the student is permitted to change the contract only to a higher grade. A course planned in this way consists of the following elements: (1) a written statment of objectives to be achieved by students; (2) content to be used to reach objectives for which credit is awarded at the junior and senior levels; (3) expected levels of achievement; and (4) procedures for evaluation. The rationale for contract teaching rests upon the philosophy that contracted responsibilities are not built one upon the other so that the more work that is accomplished, the higher the grade; rather, the quality of work is considered to be the criteria for academic achievement. An example is given of using this method of teaching in a physical education course. In the course, "Psychosocial Implications of Physical Education," alternative choices were introduced within the grade options. For an "A" contract, in addition to other responsibilities, the student could elect an observational study of an athletic event or a written autobiography describing a personal critical psychological event during sports participation. A bibliography is attached to this paper. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

EDA Convention
Baltimore, MD
March 2, 1978

MAR 20 10 31 AM '78

CONTRACT TEACHING - ONE STEP TOWARD HUMANIZING EDUCATION

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

by

Barbara A. Aierstock, Professor
Health and Physical Education
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Barbara A. Aierstock
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND THE ERIC SYSTEM CONTRACTORS."

ED151308

Many things have been written about contract teaching and it would seem that a progress report, by someone who has been using contract teaching for five years might be preferable to a formal academic treatise on pedagogical strategies.

I have been involved with teaching students who are preparing for the profession of health and physical education for almost twenty years, and, as others who are committed to the educational growth of students, I have been continually exploring new and better techniques toward that end. It has long been my contention that the development of the individual's potential is the important element in educating and, in that sense, I have a humanistic philosophical approach to education. Three-quarters of the time that I taught was spent in teaching in the "traditional" way, i.e., lecture-discussion approach. I felt comfortable using this technique and had some reasonably favorable feed-back from former students over the years.

Then, came the epidemic of public and professional concern for accountability and along with it, a new approach to writing objectives, new teaching techniques and a new look at evaluative processes. It appeared obvious to me that I had to take a closer look at the teaching methods that I had been using. I, along with other colleagues, were requested to rewrite our traditional objectives to conform with the format proposed by Robert Mager(11) for behavioral objectives. This developed into more than an exercise in sentence construction for I soon learned that the fundamental concern is with exit rather than entrance requirements using performance as the criteria for evaluation. Goals became more realistic for the students with respect to their individual needs as prospective teachers. Translating the traditionally stated objectives to behavioral objectives, hereafter referred to as behavioral competencies, in the psychomotor domain and the cognitive domain prove to be a delightful challenge. Not so easily constructed, were those behavioral competencies in the affective domain. For example, how can one be certain that a student has developed an appreciation for a sport? It appeared that the key to writing these competencies lies with providing voluntary experiences for students that will hopefully enrich their understanding of the subject. Under no circumstances will I concede that competencies in the affective domain should not be stated because they cannot be measured! At least, they will serve to remind us to conduct ourselves in such a manner as to hopefully affect the performance outcome of our students.

SP012 261

Writing behavioral competencies caused me to make a closer self-examination with respect to the criteria I considered paramount in the teaching process. From a humanistic educational philosopical base, I found six basic criteria emerge. They are:

1. creating a learning atmosphere which allows the student freedom to reach toward his maximum potential
2. encouraging a sense of responsibility in the student for his own learning and at his own rate
3. developing a mutual respect for ideas between the student and the teacher
4. minimizing the stress relative to the evaluative process and striving to ensure that it is a positive task in the learning environment
5. bridging the gap between the theoretical constructs and the practical application of the same
6. fostering intellectual curiosity and academic creativity.

In order to satisfy these criteria and to keep abreast with current educational trends, it was noted that individualizing education for students has gained increased prominence in higher education in recent years. As a matter of fact, the Department of Education of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the Basic Education Circular 154[7] regarding new health and physical education regulations effective July 1, 1975 states that:

"A planned course shall consist of at least:

A written statement of objectives to be achieved by students.

Content to be used to reach objectives for which credit is awarded at the junior high and senior high levels.

Expected levels of achievement.

Procedures for evaluation."

One way to approach individualized instruction is through contracting with the student. Essentially, contracting for grades according to Neal Berte[4] includes, "...an agreement between a teacher and a student at the beginning of a course as to the grade the student expects to receive and the amount and quality of work he is expected to produce to earn this grade."

My first experience in contracting with students involved contracting for letter grades in a senior level professional preparation course entitled, "History and Philosophy of Physical Education". Approximately two weeks after the course began, students were asked their option for the grade "A", "B", or "C". Once the contract with the instructor was signed, the student was permitted to change the contract only to a higher grade. Failure to meet the responsibilities for the assigned contractual agreement automatically places the student in the positon of fulfilling the contract for the next lower grade. In the eventuality that a student found himself in the position of fulfilling the next lower grade, some credit was given for tasks already accomplished.

As I mentioned before, there was no contract below the grade of "C" primarily, because I believe that the professional major students should most certainly not aspire to anything lower than a "C". However, minimal responsibilities were noted in the outline provided for the student. Included in these minimal responsibilties were course examinations i.e., an oral mid-semester examination and a written final examination. I would like to mention about oral examinations since I used this technique in several different courses and found it quite successful. In the case of this course, the students were each given a twenty minute appointment with the instructor for the purpose of testing knowledge at the mid-semester time period. A number of one word answer questions were asked, followed by several analytical type questions. If the student failed to demonstrate understanding of the material involved, he was retested until that understanding was attained. Approximately 10% of the students required one or more retesting periods, but the immediate feedback of information missed seemed to be a positive motivation toward developing a command over the material. It can readily be seen that this type of evaluation can be extremely time consuming and so, as I developed this technique, I kept the retesting periods down to one. I experimented with another evaluative technique in this class with the final examination. I used take-home examinations. On the last class meeting day, each student was given a final examination consisting of three questions to take home. One of the questions required the student to philosophically defend a statement and the other two questions asked the student to trace an overall specific historical facet. Each student was given different questions. On the day of the final examination, the students brought their prepared answers to class and debate on the philosophical statements and discussion of the historical occurrences took place.

Class experiences included oral group presentations which helped create group inter-actions, permitting the free exchange of ideas. Students selected the historical time period in which they wanted to report and, along with several other members of the class, presented important elements in that period. Presentations have included modeling of period costumes, debates among historical figures, cross word puzzles and an analytical view of sport in Eastern and Western culture, including demonstrations of karate, yoga, and zen archery. Of particular note was the presentation of, "women in sport" on slides, combined with a cassette tape of music and narration, prepared by students. This was a most ambitious project and very well received by the entire class.

As one of the tasks for the "contract" in "History and Philosophy of Physical Education", the student was asked to write an article which is appropriate for publication in a professional journal. The student develops a topic of current professional interest and discusses the idea with the instructor. After formulating major concepts relative to the topic, an outline is prepared and discussed with the instructor and class members. Several drafts of the full article are submitted and, finally, the article is accepted or rejected by the instructor, depending upon how well the idea was developed. It is obvious that gramatical errors and style of writing must be polished before the article may be

considered for publication. As a direct result from this course, several articles were completed and submitted for publication in the Pennsylvania Journal of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation.

It is my philosophy that contracted responsibilities are not built one upon the other so that the more work that is accomplished, the higher the grade; rather, the quality of work is considered to be the criteria for academic achievement.

This first experiment with contracting was a unique learning experience for both myself and the students. When placed in the position of selecting a grade, many students tended to contract for that grade which they had most often received in their academic experience rather than contract for a grade which they found a challange to fulfil. This raises an interesting philosopical question as to how we, as teachers, may be guilty of "conditioning" our students as to the calibre of their work, by using uncompromising evaluative procedures.

There were those few students who spent their time searching for a "loop hole" through which they could be "given" the grade without fulfilling the responsibilities. Figuring that they would contract for an "A" and perhaps not accomplish all of the work and that the least they could receive was a "B", two of the students were quite chagrined upon receiving an "F" because of their illogical approach to contracting.

It is important to note that in this first experience of contracting, 95% of the students received the grade for which they contracted and I concluded that students are ready to assume responsibility for their own education. Empirically, I must state that the better students responded more favorably to contracting.

Fully committed to experimenting with contracting, I proceeded to develop a contract for a sports skills class - namely, field hockey. At Indiana University of Pennsylvania, major activity courses include methods of teaching as well as learning the actual skill, and so this contract differs from those developed for the theory courses. Tasks for each grade were divided among three areas, i.e., skill tasks, methods tasks, and knowledge tasks. The skill tasks were so arranged that a student needed to perform only 65% of the tasks by a certain date, allowing the remaining 35% of the tasks to be accomplished at a later date - thus, giving the student more practice time. The selection of which tasks were to be accomplished first was up to the discretion of the student. This arrangement allowed flexibility for the students entry behavior.

The opportunity to analyze a classmate's skill was provided in the methods task. It gave the student a chance to practice teaching skills in front of the class without the fear of a penalty for error in presentation, and with the knowledge that if the presentation was unacceptable, she could correct the errors and repeat the task.

Skill tasks were specifically stated and measurable tasks such as "execute four consecutive drives of 50 yards or better without committing a foul", could be evaluated by a fellow classmate and reported to the instructor. Now, may I say at this point, that if one entertains the thought of student-cheating in such a circumstance, this approach is not for him because it is absolutely essential that the teacher respect the students and trusts them.

The other aspect of measuring skill that is the so-called subjective evaluation or analyses of form, has too often proved to be an enigma for students. I found that this too can be stated objectively. For example, "while running, execute three dodges (dodge to the left, dodge to the right and scoop) in acceptable form on a moving opponent", can be restated to read "while running, execute three dodges (dodge to the left, dodge to the right and scoop) on a moving opponent, attaining three points based on timing, control, and successful attempts for each dodge".

It was amazing to observe how hard the students worked on their skills, both in class and outside of class, because they knew precisely what was expected of them. Some students reported frustration at being unable to obtain a goal and expressed the fact that they preferred the more traditional approach. I suggest to you that perhaps these students were "hiding their heads in the sand" hoping for some miracle performance that would "give" them the grade for which they so much yearn. Interestingly enough, the grades earned by students through the contract teaching method were higher than those earned in previous years and I believe that there were two reasons for this. First, I was forced to reevaluate the level of skill needed by a student preparing to teach physical education and second, the students, as a whole, actually exhibited higher levels of exit performance than in past years.

Having become more comfortable with using the contract teaching approach, I decided to try some variations of contracts. Accumulation of numerical points for contracted options intrigued me because of the wide selection of tasks that the student might select. I chose a university free elective course for this experiment. The course was entitled "Psychology of Sport" and typically, 50% of the enrollment came from disciplines other than physical education.

Ten different tasks, each with different values, were presented to the student for his option. The final semester grade is the total number of points that the student accumulates based on the scale: 90-100, "A"; 80-89, "B"; 70-79, "C"; 60-69, "D"; 59-below, "F". The total point value of the ten tasks was 175 points but the student was reminded that the total number of points awarded for any single task is dependent upon the instructor's evaluation of the worthiness of the work submitted. This type of contract allows the student to work at his own rate, gives the student considerable responsibility for his own progress, and is not as highly classroom structured as the other contracts that were explained.

The type of tasks listed for this course were developed with the instructor's knowledge of the varied backgrounds of the students in mind. The tasks permitted the students to option for the particular concern they bring to the class. For example, a student majoring in physical education may be particularly interested in psychology of coaching rather than concentrating on the theories of play. A student majoring in criminology may chose to study sports and violence while a student majoring in psychology may chose to study the relationship of psychic stress to sports, in fulfilling the task requiring the student to prepare a paper on the problem of his choice related to sport psychology. These later two examples open the door to interdisciplinary involvement with faculty and students participating.

The basis of teacher evaluation is radically changed in this last contract example and rather than a project being considered satisfactory or unsatisfactory, it was given a number from zero to the total numerical worth of that particular project. Perhaps, some examples of projects included will help clarify this point. For ten points, the student might elect to investigate in depth the theories and categories of play as described by Callois, Kenyon, and Loy. This investigation is to be typed and documented - a minimum of five pages. Or, a student might elect, for 35 points, to prepare a paper on the problem of his choice related to sport psychology. The findings are to be presented to the class in at least a 30 minute oral presentation plus eight pages minimum, typed and documented.

Initially, I wanted to permit a student to attempt the same project again, if he do desired, but I soon realized it could narrow his scope of the course to an undesirable degree at the undergraduate level. In actuality, some projects were appropriate to repeat, others were not.

This is the only attempt I made to use numerical point contracted options. The book work required on the part of the instructor is lengthy and I found it relatively difficult to imagine using it in a class of over 15 students (which as many of you know, occurs infrequently in these days of fiscal concern in higher education). However, the response of the students to this variaton was overwhelmingly positive.

I refined the contract with which I first experimented in developing a physical education major course in "Psychosocial Implications of Physical Education". Still using the letter grades for contracted options, I introduced alternative choices within the grade options. For example, for an "A" contract, in addition to other responsibilities, the student could elect an observational study of an athletic event or a written autobiography describing a personal critical psychological event during sports participation.

I also encouraged the students to examine their own "feelings about human movement" through the assignment for each one to prepare a collage representing these feelings. We find this particular aspect so difficult to express to our sedentary colleagues and friends that it is my hope that this experience will help us to better communicate this very important contribution that sports and dance brings to our lives.

There are no examinations required for those students opting for an "A" or "B" grade rather, a special topic paper of the student's choice is orally presented as a culminating experience.

My final variation of the contract method is currently in progress in the senior seminar course which I team teach with a colleague. Together, we have developed the course using a modular approach with six basic themes. Although each of us has taken responsibility for developing separate themes or modules, we are frequently in the classroom together and, expertise in a particular teaching method is the deciding factor as to who will be in charge of the class for a particular day. Methods that are employed include role play, oral critical analysis of a philosophical position, directing a debate, and conducting an audio-visual program. This attempt is truly more representative of an individualized learning experience than anything I have done to date.

Each student receives a course syllabi with his own record form. Specific objectives for each module are stated and the grade evaulation is shown relative to the mastery of designated objectives.

In addition to the module grade, each student selects a culminating experience from a list of suggestions or a mutually agreed upon project by the student and the instructor.

The major problem I encountered in utilizing the contract was the amount of time that it took to provide such an experience for 30-plus students. The very nature inherent to individualizing instruction would seem to pose that hurdle and I daresay, that many teachers have dismissed the idea of contracting for that very reason. There are ways to get over the hurdle, if one is willing to depart from traditional techniques. To name a few ways:

1. Allow the student to decide when and what sessions of classes he wishes to attend; do you truly believe that 45 hours of class attendance is necessary for all students in order for them to have command of the material? Are you going to require a student to be present even though he has displayed mastery of the material?

2. Be creative in your evaluative techniques; use groups in oral testing, let the student evaluate himself, utilize peer evaluation.

3. Write your contract so that the student is absolutely clear as to the terms of the agreement; this may take time to develop!

4. Set limits for submissions of work; or you may find yourself doing the work that the student contracted to do.

5. Establish dates that work is due; your contracting should be compatible with instructor and institution time limits.

What then might be the specific educational outcomes that could be anticipated by the instructor utilizing the contract method?

1. Educational growth at the student's own rate.

   Provision for diversity and ability (both cognitive and psychomotor), age, academic and occupational interest, and past achievement must be taken into account.

2. Greater responsiblity given the student for his own progress.

   Mutual agreement between the student and teacher with regard to the student's expectations and how he can fulfil them helps the student to become self-directed.

3. Opportunity for independent study as an adjunct to classroom learning.

   Competency based courses permit the student freedom to break away from prescribed rigid assignments.

4. Improvement in the learning environment with respect to feedback, motivation and teacher/student mutual respect.

   Removal of anxiety and fear associated with ambigious expectations and evaluations provide a positive learning climate.

5. Evaluation by the student of His own progress.

   If a student is aware of what is expected of him from the start, he can determine what has been accomplished and what remains to be satisfied.

6. Understanding professional goals and standards by the student.

   Promoting the development of skills and techniques for continued self-education helps the student become aware that his education does not stop at the end of his formal studies.

7. Encouragement of creativity.

   Breaking the confines to traditional ways of learning by permitting the student flexibility of how he approaches a given task broadens the perspective of his World.

The education of our youth has come under increasing attack by various forms of the media and, as societal values change, so must our approach to the teaching-learning process change. In an era when "self-actualization" is the philosopical committment, it makes sense to look at methods that encourage the students to assume more responsibility for their own education. I do not believe that contract teaching is the answer to all educational problems nor that it is appropriate for every situation, but I do believe that it is one step toward humanizing education.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Anderson, Eugene W. "New Role Expectations For Contract Teaching". Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, October, 1974, p. 37.

2. Annarino, Anthony A. "Physical Education Objectives: Traditional vs. Developmental", Journal of Physical Education and Recreation, October, 1977, p. 23.

3. Barnes, Ron. "Learning Systems for the Future", Bloomington: The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Institution, 1972.

4. Berte, Neal R. (ed.). "Individualizing Education by Learning Contracts", New Directions for Higher Education, Washington: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1975.

5. Blaschke, Charles. "Performance Contracting: Who Profits Most?", Bloomington: The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Institution, 1972.

6. Burdin, Joel. "Three Views of Competency - Based Teacher Education: I Theory", Bloomington: The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Institution, 1974.

7. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Education. "Basic Education Circular #154", November 1, 1974.

8. Freeman, William H. "Competency Based Teacher Education: The Other Side", Journal of Physical Education and Recreation, January, 1977, p. 26.

9. Freischlog, Jerry. "Competency Based Instruction", Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, January, 1974, p. 29.

10. Locke, Lawrence R. and Dolly Lambdin. "Personalized Learning in Physical Education", Journal of Physical Education and Recreation, June, 1976, p. 32.

11. Mager, Robert F. "Preparing Institutional Objectives", Palo Alto: Fearon Publishers, 1962.